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**Environment Department Advises “BOIL WATER ORDER” for  
El Rito Canyon Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Association**

(Santa Fe, NM) –The New Mexico Environment Department’s (NMED) Drinking Water Bureau has advised the El Rito Canyon Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Association (MDWCA) to issue a “boil water order” for its consumers.

The El Rito Canyon MDWCA is located approximately 3 miles northwest of the main village of El Rito on New Mexico State Road 110 in Rio Arriba County. The system serves approximately 250-300 consumers. The village water system was put on a “boil water advisory” on February 25, 2004, due to bacteriological contamination that exceeded the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for *E.coli*. NMED requires that the system owner and operator notify all customers served by that system of this finding.

Consumers of the El Rito Canyon water system are advised to boil water for five minutes before drinking, cooking, and dishwashing.

The presence of *E. coli* in water indicates that the water may have been in contact with sewage or animal wastes, and could contain disease-causing organisms. Most strains of *E. coli* are harmless and live in the intestines of healthy humans and animals. However, a positive test for *E. coli* in the drinking water supply may indicate the presence of dangerous strains of *E. coli* or other disease-causing organisms, which are sometimes found in sewage or animal wastes. These types of organisms may cause severe gastrointestinal illness and, in rare cases, even death. Children, the elderly, and immuno-compromised individuals are at an increased risk for illness.

Actions have been initiated to identify the possible source(s) of contamination, complete any mechanical repairs if applicable, shock chlorinate the entire water system with approved treatment techniques, and increase field monitoring. In addition, the Drinking Water Bureau will continue to assist with trouble-shooting to identify the source of the problem along with the assistance of their contractor, the New Mexico Rural Water Association.

The New Mexico Department of Health has also been notified and will remain on alert for any health effects linked to this water quality issue. Consumers of the water system may call (505) 841-5894, if they have any water-related health concerns.

For more information contact Chris Serazio, Env. Specialist, NMED, at (505) 827-1400 x.1031 or Jon Goldstein, Communications Director, NMED at (505) 827-0314.

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